

the amendments with limited debate, and then move this bill to a cloture vote tomorrow, which, if it were invoked, would see the passage of the bill as soon as tomorrow. That offer by Senator FEINGOLD was rejected.

So to say that we are foot-dragging on this side of the aisle or that any Democratic Senator such as Senator FEINGOLD is not trying to cooperate does not accurately state what we have been through to this moment on the PATRIOT Act.

I will close by saying that despite partisan differences, there is partisan cooperation in this Chamber, and I wish to say as I close these remarks that I want to salute Senator JOHN SUNUNU on the Republican side of the aisle; he has worked night and day over the last several months to come up with what I consider to be a reasonable way to end the current debate on the PATRIOT Act.

We stood together, we worked together, we brought the issue to the floor. I don't think it is unreasonable to give Senator FEINGOLD his moment to offer amendments with limited debate, bring them to a vote, put the Senate on the record, and move forward. To suggest otherwise does not reflect an accurate presentation of the facts as they occurred.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I find my colleague's comments in response to my statement that the problem is that we are seeing this whole pattern of obstruction and postponement—it is not just one bill, it is this whole series of bills—I find his comments responsive to several of the things I said but not really responsive to this pattern. I really just want to make that a comment and not get into a long debate about it. But I do want to point out that pattern of the things that I mentioned, like the PATRIOT Act as my colleague pointed out, it is time to bring this to a close.

This thing is going to pass overwhelmingly, and that is exactly right. I rejected options to continue to amend this forever. The problem, in part, that got us to this point is every time we come to an agreement which is a bill that, as written, will have over-

whelming support in this body, somebody will come forward and say: One more amendment, one more amendment, one more amendment.

It is exactly right. It is time to bring this to a close. This will pass with overwhelming support—not today, as it should have, or tomorrow or Monday or Tuesday, but on Wednesday morning. It is going to pass with overwhelming support.

My point is this whole delay, this postponement, is stopping the Nation's business as we have to address other important issues—whether it is our budgetary issues, whether issues on health care or education or LIHEAP, flood insurance or lobbying reform. All these issues get put off another 4 or 5 days—yes, using the rights we have on this floor. I respect that. But to no avail. It is hurting the American people, not helping the American people.

Asbestos—this is a complicated bill. It is a bill many of us have been working on for 3 years. We started the bill, not Tuesday or Monday of this week and not Friday of last week or Thursday or Tuesday, but I think it was Monday morning that we said: Let's talk about this bill, let's debate this bill and have unlimited debate. As I pointed out, they said: No, we are not going to go to the bill. We are not going to go to a bill which is an important bill which has to be addressed.

We have 700,000 individuals who have filed claims for their illnesses, and 300,000 of those claims are still pending in the courts. Tragically, as I mentioned earlier, some of the most ill among those are among the worst served because of the delay in having the cases considered, and then, once considered, even if they get compensation for every dollar that is spent, 60 cents goes to the system and the trial lawyers and only 40 cents goes to the patient.

Yet, because of this mentality of Democrats, obstructing—they say you are not going to go to the bill. You are going to have to file a motion to proceed and cloture on that motion to proceed to the bill, which is a waste of 2 days. Then the vote was either 98 to 2 or 98 to 1. So once we got to the vote, they said: We will be with you, let's go ahead and consider it. And then to hear my colleagues say: We didn't have an

opportunity to debate, when it was a request from your side of the aisle that we take a whole day, that we not have amendments but just to talk about it again—I am not sure why—but then to complain that we did not have time to offer amendments when it came to that first day—I think it was Wednesday; no amendments today—it is a little bit disingenuous, especially as it fits this larger pattern I laid out of the tax relief bill just to get to conference requiring three separate considerations on this floor, 17 rollcall votes for the first 20-hour limitation, the second 20-hour limitation requiring seven more rollcall votes, motions to instruct here all yesterday morning, nonbinding motions.

The pensions bill, I still do not fully understand why there is delay in getting the pensions bill to conference, when the first request was made in December and the second one earlier this year, and then now, on an important bill, when people are out there saying we have to address the pension bill—it passed the Senate, passed the House of Representatives—we have to get it to conference so we can come up with a final product for the President to sign.

Instead of arguing each of these individual bills, I just wanted to make the point that it is a pattern that we cannot continue. We have to work together in the Nation's interest, in the interests of the American people. Unless things are changed, we are not going to be delivering what we are responsible to do.

Anyway, that is a little bit out of my frustration with the other side of the aisle in terms of the way they have conducted business, and I believe we can work together in a civil way to address these important issues in the coming days.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:50 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, February 16, 2006, at 9:30 a.m.